1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

175 the Recôncavo, for they took with them a newly acquired knowledge of
648 sugar cane cultivation.

175 The eighteenth century opened with a series of disasters for
169 the region. When word of gold discoveries in Minas Gerais (1704)
567 reached Bahia, an exodus began.[25] Slaves were sold at exorbitant prices, and often masters and slaves together went off to the mines. The colonial authorities took drastic steps to halt the flight, but
[731] to no avail. The first quarter of the century ended with floods in the Recôncavo and the discovery of diamonds in the interior. There was a second exodus.[26]

175 In the meantime there were momentous developments in the
171 West Indies. Sugar cane cultivation spread rapidly in the Antilles
249 as the Netherlands and other northwestern European states which had been lucrative markets for Brazilian sugar began their own production in their respective West Indian colonies. In addition to the protected markets which the mother countries afforded, these new centers enjoyed sound economic and geographical advantages. As newcomers to the field of sugar production, the Antilles were free of both the antiquated equipment and the backward techniques which burdened Brazil, and they were closer to the major European markets.[27]

175 The Recôncavo was unable to counter these West Indian develop-
178 ments. In a century and a half of commercial development there had
185 been few improvements in agricultural or industrial methods. There
249 was no conservation of the soil. Only one variety of cane was known, and there was no attempt to develop improved strains. The mills continued to burn expensive wood rather than to use bagasse. Antique, low-yielding crushing mills continued to be used for extraction.[28]

175 At the end of the eighteenth century, however, developments
249 abroad restored to the Recôncavo and to Brazil many of the advantages
178 which it had formerly held in the international market. This
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161 force of the 21 municípios--without regard to direction of change--was
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241 13 per cent.
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In general the area around Salvador and the northeastern and western margins of the Recôncavo gained in agricultural labor force (Map 19). The Central Recôncavo and areas in the north-central, eastern, and southwestern Recôncavo lost agriculturalists between 1940 and 1950. Some of the factors which produced these changes were local; others were identified with the Northeast or with Brazil as a whole.

The growth of cities in the Recôncavo is a manifestation of a nationwide phenomenon. The expanding urban centers create an increasing market for agricultural products which, because of the difficulty of transportation and the lack of food processing facilities, must be supplied primarily from local sources. These expanding markets attract discontented or displaced agriculturalists, who settle as close to the urban center as possible. There is a marked increase in the concentration of agricultural labor around Salvador, Feira de Santana, and Alagoinhas.

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In 1950 and 1951 the urban trend and its agricultural concomitant was re-enforced by a specific Northeastern phenomenon--the flight from the drought (sêca) of the interior. Most of the refugees (flagelados) from the dry sertão settled along the periphery of the Recôncavo. Here, where they could remain close to their cherished sertão, much land was open for squatters. As indicated above, others settled around the urban centers of the Recôncavo caatinga zone--Feira de Santana and Alagoinhas.

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Observations suggest that the greatest relative increases in agricultural labor force from the sertão were in the municípios bordering the Recôncavo on the west and north, where the "normal"

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agricultural population is small. However, refugees from the drought also found their way into most parts of the Recôncavo. Even in 1953 they were to be encountered as squatters in Muritiba, as cane field workers in Santo Amaro, and as porters in Salvador.

Refugees from secas usually have not become permanent additions to the labor force of the Recôncavo. The sertanejo of the Northeast is renowned in Brazil for his attachment to his terra (native soil), no matter how cruelly it treats him. Especially those migrants who settle as squatters on the margins of the Recôncavo seem only to wait for the renewal of the rains to return to the sertão. In 1953 migrants were still entering the Recôncavo along the Feira de Santana-Salvador highway, but others were boarding the train in Salvador and returning to the sertão. They had come from the sertão on foot or by begging rides on trucks, found jobs in the Recôncavo, saved a few cruzeiros, and were returning to their native terra. Some refugees remain in the Recôncavo, of course, but the number is proportionately very small.

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Several sections of the Recôncavo, notably the sugar cane zone, are losing rural population and agricultural labor at a serious rate. The municípios of Santo Amaro and São Francisco lost 6,400 agriculturalists between 1940 and 1950. The reduction in the number of agriculturalists in the sugar area is at least partially a symptom of the growing rationalization of labor under the big usinas, which increasingly dominate the sugar industry. The emigration from these areas is selective--the majority of the emigrants are young adults who leave to seek employment and broader opportunity elsewhere.

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Emigration within the Recôncavo is one current of the great tide of agricultural unrest ascribed to all of Brazil.

> The rural Brazilian of the lower classes is notorious for his nomadic or migratory habits, for his lack of permanent attachment to the soil, for his tendency to

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*249 time and remained high until the 1888 decree which ended slavery completely. Before this time there had already been a great deal of manumission.

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571 In fact, it is distinctive of the entire region that the relations between the whites and the slaves were relatively warm and intimate. Gilberto Freyre describes the intimacy between the moleque (little Negro boy) and the master's son as playmates, between the master's wife and her domestics, between the Negro nursemaid and her white charges, between Negroes and whites in other close relationships on these plantations. A good deal of race mixture occurred. It is still a joke in this region to say that a particular plantation owner "populated the area."

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[654] The crises through which the sugar industry passed during its four-hundred-year history are interesting and worthy of consideration. During the first fifty years of production (until early in the seventeenth century), the sugar industry prospered and expanded. It was a "period of formation, official protection, and government stimulation, during which the liberties of production, transportation, prices and commerce suffered little or no restrictions."[1] The seventeenth century, however, was full of crises, one of the greatest being the war with Holland. In 1624 the Dutch attempted to capture Bahia but were repulsed. However, they sailed along the shores of the Bay of All Saints, burning and sacking plantations and setting fire to the cane fields. In the north the Dutch succeeded in capturing Pernambuco, which they retained for twenty-four years, also engaging in the production of sugar. In 1644 the Dutch governor, Maurice of Nassau, was recalled to Holland, and the colony was left undirected. The Brazilians revolted and recaptured Pernambuco.

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648 In 1666 there was an epidemic of smallpox in the Recôncavo which reduced the slave population and left many plantation owners without laborers. There followed a period of near-famine for some years, due to the lack of food-plant cultivation. While this situation continued, plantation masters frequently mortgaged their plantations in order to buy new

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1. J. Wanderley de Araujo Pinho, Historia de um engenho do Recôncavo, 1552-1944 (Rio de Janeiro, 1946), p. 193. The following three paragraphs are a condensation of the material contained in pp. 193-220 (author's translation).

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*249 found themselves, with no food, their slaves dying, the price
458 of sugar falling, the markets lost, and, especially, overbur-
648 dening taxes. Most of the documents which remain are pessi-
651 mistic ones, for during the times of prosperity little was writ-
ten. At any rate, late in the eighteenth century some measures
were taken to lighten the burden of taxation and to provide bet-
ter means of transportation to Europe than the irregular sys-
tem of fleets which were frequently spaced two and three
years apart. As a result, many plantation owners took heart
and applied themselves again to the raising of sugar cane.
They were further aided by an increasing market in Europe,
which finally became almost entirely theirs at the turn of the
century, as a result of the European wars.

175 By the end of the Napoleonic wars sugar production was at
*249 its best, and Bahia was once again experiencing a pleasurable
458 prosperity. However, 1822 brought the War of Independence,
669 much of it fought in the Recôncavo. The war was supported to
[731] a great extent by the plantation masters, both financially and
physically. Although they gained a great deal of prestige, they
lost two harvests, and their exports fell off greatly. It took
them some time to recuperate, and in 1855 they suffered
another violent blow, an epidemic of cholera.

175 An indication of the difficulties caused by the epidemic is
*249 given in the following passage, translated from a document in
458 the inventory of the Baron of Caju made upon the death of his
731 wife, a victim of cholera:

> The family was in a good state of animation and pros-
> perity in 1855, when the fatal epidemic of cholera mor-
> bus wasted this Province, invading the home of the In-
> ventoried and causing him horrible damages and enormous
> losses! The Baroness fell victim to this voracious scourge!
> Eighty-two of the most valuable and useful slaves had the
> same fate; the best expediencies, treatment, and vigilant
> care were of no effect! Almost the entire harvest of this
> fatal year was lost in the complete absence of field hands,
> for the number not stricken was small, and the others,
> convalescents, were truly specters! The harvests of 1856
> and 1857 also suffered.

438 Soon afterwards a new phase began when the Civil War
*175 started in the United States, sending up the price of sugar
249 and increasing the market. Some years after this a disease
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2: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1960-1961) 1967 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

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struck the sugar cane itself, and production again dropped greatly. At the same time, coffee began to attract attention in São Paulo and the few slaves for sale were sent there, where they commanded a higher price, thereby causing a shortage of workmen in the Recôncavo. In 1888 a final blow was the abolition of slavery. Production dropped to a new low, and the twentieth century was entered during what was called the gravest crisis the industry had ever experienced.

During the late nineteenth century there were several attempts to better the machinery used in the fabrication of sugar. New methods were introduced from abroad, and at the turn of the century the usina made its first appearance on the scene. The usina represents the large-scale central factory, designed to mill the cane of many plantations, thereby raising the total sugar production.[2] The state government took a hand and financed the construction of three factories which were given to various individuals as concessions. There was an effort to revive the industry on a different and stronger basis. At the same time, however, the Recôncavo, as well as other parts of Brazil, felt the pull of the rubber boom in the Amazon and lost some of its manpower. But once again a European war came to the rescue, and during the second and third decades of this century the sugar industry prospered. Many factories were erected, and there was a definite feeling of optimism, which ended abruptly in 1929 and 1930 as a result of prolonged overproduction. In 1933 the Institute of Sugar and Alcohol was established by the national government to regulate production. The new regulations caused dissatisfaction and disputes, and production fell off sharply, only to rise again after World War II when many of the restrictions imposed by the institute were lifted. At the present time the Recôncavo seems to be experiencing a mild phase of affluence.

It is the introduction of the large-scale central factory which holds the most interest for us in this recital of crises, for it was this innovation which brought the maximum amount of change to the town and the entire community structure.

The factory was conceived of as a large mechanized mill,

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2. Hereafter, the word "factory" will be used to designate the usina; wherever the word "factory" appears it should be understood to mean sugar-cane milling factory, unless otherwise qualified. (Editor's note.)

2: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
VILA RECÔNCAVO

[The Usina]

Financially the two units--factory and plantation--are run separately. One set of books is kept for the agricultural part, and one set for the factory. The six plantations combined produced eighteen thousand tons of cane in 1950, although they had planned on twenty-three thousand. The fall in the expected harvest was due to several things. First, less new cane was planted, because of the activities of the petroleum workers who were invading the cane fields of the factory and drilling oil wells. (The first time a field is cut, the percentage of cane is higher than that obtained by cuts during the next four or five years. The same amount of land, therefore, will produce more cane if it is replanted regularly. The factory, however, deemed it wiser to be content with the older plantings for one year because of the oil workers' invasion, for newly planted cane is more subject to damage than an established field.) Second, during that year there was a serious drought which affected adversely the growth of sugar cane. There is no irrigation in the Recôncavo, and during the drought seasons which come periodically a partial crop loss nearly always occurs. In addition one entire taboleiro caught fire and burned to the ground, causing the loss of many tons of cane.

The agricultural cycle and the work on a plantation may be divided into two broad epochs, summer and winter. Summer is the busiest season, for it is harvest time and all hands are occupied, including the migrant workers. The cutters with their machetes cut an average of three to four tons a day apiece, which must be quickly loaded and carried to the factory and milled, for the longer the lapse of time between the two operations, the greater the loss of sugar content. After a field has been cut, one of two things occurs. If it is to be turned into pasture, it is fenced, and the draft animals are turned loose in it. Otherwise the leaves which were cut from the top of the plant and left lying on the ground are burned, and within a short time the roots start sending up new shoots. This old planting (soca) each year gives a decreased yield. As a rule a field is cut and burned three to four years before being turned into pasture. In the days of the old plantations, when the soil was more vigorous, cane of twelve years was considered "new cane." Now, however, the yield is so decreased by the increasing poverty of the soil that three to four years is the best, depending upon the amount of rain. During the summer, if land is prepared and there are prospects of heavy showers, "summer plantings" may be made. They are never as good as those done in the winter, for the sun frequently

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VILA REGÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

Because there are only 265 acres of manioc under cultivation in the entire county, production is far below the amount of farina consumed, and it is necessary to import the milled manioc tuber which constitutes the major dietary item of the people. In 1951 a municipal law was passed prohibiting the exportation of farina. Three times during the author's stay in the town there was a pronounced lack of farina, when there was almost none to be bought and its price per liter rose from one to three cruzeiros. That year's drought was also partly responsible for the shortage.

Bananas are the only commercial export crop of the gardeners. There are approximately 15,000 banana trees in the county, producing for the commercial market an annual production of 177,000 arms (cachos) of bananas, providing an income of Cr$500,000,00. The fruits are sold to a middleman from Bahia who knows most of the gardeners in the area. Once a week, or every two weeks, he arrives at the town in a large sailboat to receive the fresh bananas, which he then takes to Bahia and sells. Sometimes a gardener sells an arm of bananas to a woman in town who then resells them to townspeople. Few people in town have to buy them, however, for each household has at least one banana tree in the back yard. An acre of land supports about 144 banana trees, which when well cared for produce 1,500 arms a year. The fruits are sold in cargoes of fifty arms at Cr$160,00 a cargo, so that one acre earns about Cr$5,000,00 a year. This sum is almost entirely profit, for gardeners do most of their own work, except when they have too much land for one man to take care of properly. Hired help is paid in accordance with the service performed: ten cruzeiros for cutting fifty arms of bananas, twenty for transporting them to the dock if the gardener does not have his own animals, and a hundred cruzeiros an acre for "cleaning," i.e., cutting down and burning old stalks and leaves and keeping the weeds cut down.

Manioc presents a slightly different case, for the raw product must be processed before it is consumed. The manioc root from which farina is made is the poisonous variety and must be peeled and grated, pressed to remove the juice, and then toasted. The final product is a white powder, fine or coarse depending upon the type of grater used. Most of the local product is a coarse type (farinha de guerra). One of the gardeners has a flour house where the tubers are converted into flour. He mills his own manioc there and lets others use the machinery, charging them one liter of farina out of each ten they produce.